

1) Well, let's pick up where we left off last time ...

***James 1:26–27 (NASB 2020)***

<sup>26</sup> If anyone thinks himself to be **religious**, yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his *own* heart, this person's **religion** is worthless. <sup>27</sup> Pure and undefiled **religion** in the sight of *our* God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself unstained by the world.

2) The same word translated religious is used in all three places in these two verses.

a) It refers to external religious rituals, liturgies, routines, and ceremonies.

b) Josephus used the word in describing temple worship.

3) I think to move this into our world, we would simply say:

a) Going to church, giving, taking communion, fellowshiping, attending bible classes, or journey group and anything else that might fall into this type of activity.

4) Now, if we were to step out of the literal and into a broader scope when we consider the conclusion of verse 26 and all of verse 27, we could say:

a) For vs. 26 – anything that we do that is not “in accordance with God’s will”.

b) For vs. 27 – anything that we do that is reflective of our love for others as dictated by God.

5) To say it somewhat differently –

if we do all the “worship things” but we do not really follow God’s will for us – in other words, looking in the mirror and walking away – then God does not accept all the other stuff as having any meaning – it is worthless.

6) One thing we should note here as well is that James says when we find ourselves in this condition, we are deceiving our own heart.

a) Staying with the mirror example, again we are ignoring the problem we are seeing which of course accomplishes nothing.

7) As we think about this, we may conclude that James is a little harsh or pragmatic in his assessment of the outcomes regarding not bridling our tongues.

8) However, I would call our attention to a scripture that really backs up what he is saying, and it may be even a little harder to think about.

a) Here, Jesus is obviously talking to the pharisees...

***Matthew 12:34–37 (NASB 2020)***

***Words Reveal Character***

<sup>34</sup> You offspring of vipers, how can you, being evil, express *any* good things? **For the mouth speaks from that which fills the heart.** <sup>35</sup> The good person brings out of *his* good treasure good things; and the evil person brings out of *his* evil treasure evil things. <sup>36</sup> **But I tell you that for every careless word that people speak, they will give an account of it on the day of judgment.** <sup>37</sup> **For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”**

9) That to me is a very serious thing to contemplate.

10) Ok, let's get into some new territory and look at verse 27.

<sup>27</sup> Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of *our* God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself unstained by the world.

11) As we look at this, the first part may seem very specific where the second part is very broad.

12) However, I don't think that is the case.

13) The expression "to visit" here in God's view would not be just to say hello – it would be to help – to actually care for these people in some way.

14) James points to these folks because they are the most disenfranchised people one could find in those times.

a) Widows without families and orphans were without income and without means to do anything about their situation without others intervening.

i) Reduced to begging in many cases.

b) Widows were not considered in inheritance – everything went to the oldest sons.

c) The expectation was that the family would take care of them.

i) Paul speaks to this in detail in 1 Tim 5.

15) God has always had a special interest in widows and orphans and strangers or aliens.

**Exodus 22:22–24 (NASB 2020)**

<sup>22</sup> You shall not oppress any widow or orphan. <sup>23</sup> If you oppress him at all, *and* if he does cry out to Me, I will assuredly hear his cry; <sup>24</sup> and My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

**Psalms 68:5 (NASB 2020)**

<sup>5</sup> A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows,  
Is God in His holy dwelling.

**Deuteronomy 27:19 (NASB 2020)**

<sup>19</sup> 'Cursed is one who distorts the justice *due* a stranger, an orphan, or a widow.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

**Jeremiah 7:6–7 (NASB 2020)**

<sup>6</sup> *if* you do not oppress the stranger, the orphan, or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, nor follow other gods to your own ruin, <sup>7</sup> then I will let you live in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever.

16) Some translations use the word aliens in these last two passages instead of strangers.

17) Regardless of that, at the heart of all of this is love

a) Love for God by keeping His word and living as He wants us to.

b) Love for our fellowman shown in many different ways.

## **James – Faith Demonstrated – 2025**

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18) We must not limit the marginalized to these two categories of widows and orphans.

- a) To do so I think would miss the broader point.
- b) We do have a special responsibility to them; there is no doubt about that.

19) However, we need to think of other groups as well.

### **What might be some of these groups that we should care for be?**

- a) homeless, the incarcerated, the ethnic minorities, women, children, widowers, immigrants, abuse survivors, people with mental illnesses, the unemployed, the aged

1) Ok, moving on we begin chapter 2.

### **James 2:1–7 (NASB 2020)**

#### **The Sin of Partiality**

<sup>1</sup> My brothers *and sisters*, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with *an attitude of* personal favoritism.

2) We are going to stop here for just a minute.

- a) This verse is very difficult to translate, and I am not in favor of the NASB 2020's rendition of it.
- b) Here is the NIV of the same verse.

### **James 2:1 (NIV)**

#### **Favoritism Forbidden**

**2** My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism.

- c) This, in my opinion, the better of the two translations.
- d) Based on the context of the following verses I think it captures the meaning much better.

3) So, continuing...

<sup>2</sup> For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring *and is dressed* in bright clothes, and a poor man in dirty clothes also comes in, <sup>3</sup> and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the bright clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good *place*," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," <sup>4</sup> have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? <sup>5</sup> Listen, my beloved brothers *and sisters*: did God not choose the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? <sup>6</sup> But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? <sup>7</sup> Do they not blaspheme the good name by which you have been called?

1) There is an indirect tie back to the discussion we had looking at verses 9-10.

### **James 1:9–10 (NASB 2020)**

## **James – Faith Demonstrated – 2025**

<sup>9</sup> Now the brother *or sister* of humble *circumstances* is to glory in his high position;  
<sup>10</sup> but the rich person *is to glory* in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away.

- 2) In these verses which we covered previously, James is dealing with how we as Christians must consider ourselves in our own economic circumstances
  - a) Where we should find our personal value.
- 3) In this present case the consideration is how we look at others and dealing with their perceived status in life – rich or poor.
- 4) The bottom line is when we look at people who we are in contact with and let their status in life affect how we deal with the person we have made a mistake.
- 5) In James' words “we have made distinctions among ourselves and become judges with evil motives.”
  - a) Another very strong statement but true, nonetheless.
- 6) Now, let's get some things out of the way ...
  - a) It is obvious that in truth we cannot treat these two individuals “exactly the same.” – they are different!
  - b) The rich person probably needs no financial help whereas the poor person may need help.
  - c) Their makeups are likely different in many ways – personality, education, etc.
  - d) However, to be clear, those things are different from what James is talking about here.
- 7) The true situation James is discussing is not how we deal with how the person differs from us needs or even their needs or lack of needs.
  - a) It is showing a preference – it is treating the two individuals of different “means, appearance, and even different levels of cleanliness” differently in the exact same circumstances.
- 8) I think to state it clearly, it is “showing favoritism to the one and not the other because of their status” that he is defining here.
- 9) We need to unpack the rest of this before we move on.
- 10) First – we “become judges with evil motives”

### **What to you think James means by that statement – specifically, what are the evil motives?**

- a) Perhaps we hope to receive benefit from our special treatment of the rich person.
  - b) Perhaps we are showing prejudice, bias, or bigotry in our denigration of the poor person.
- 11) Next, he points out clearly that by offering the poor man a less than honorable position we will dishonor him.
- 12) And, on the other hand, perhaps the very person who is going to cause you massive amounts of grief, because of his wealth, you have favored him.
  - a) He may even be one who blasphemes the name of our Lord.

**Do you think James is telling us to treat all wealthy folks with suspicion and perhaps even disdain?**

**Along the same lines, should we elevate every poor person above everyone else in the room just because they are poor?**

13) I personally do not think so on either score.

- a) I think what he is trying to impress on us here is that the person's status in life should not make any difference in our treatment of that individual.
  - i) Neither to the good or to the bad – not showing favorites or treating with suspicion.
- b) We may find later that either the poor or the rich may not be truly worthy of our “undying love” so to speak.
  - i) But we must begin with the love of Christ in our hearts and show that love to them.
    - (1) What is returned is really up to them.
- c) It is really not up to us to judge the state of these folk's hearts.
- d) Again, that may become apparent further down the road, but our first impression and their appearance is not what our response should be based upon.